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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 005194

SIPDIS

BEIJING ALSO PASS AMCONSUL CHENGDU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/23/2012

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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE WOULD WELCOME CONTINUED PRESIDENTIAL PUSH  
FOR GREATER RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN CHINA

CLASSIFIED BY: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES D. BRENT HARDT FOR REASON 1.5(B) AND (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH MEETS WITH CHINESE  
PRESIDENT JIANG OCTOBER 24 IN CRAWFORD, THE HOLY SEE WOULD  
CONFIDENTIAL

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WELCOME A CONTINUED STRONG PRESIDENTIAL PUSH FOR RELIGIOUS  
FREEDOM IN CHINA, REINFORCING THE MESSAGE THE PRESIDENT  
DELIVERED IN HIS LAST MEETING WITH JIANG. HOLY SEE FOREIGN  
MINISTER ARCHBISHOP JEAN-LOUIS TAURAN TOLD CHARGE OCTOBER 22  
THAT THE HOLY SEE GREATLY APPRECIATED THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORTS  
ON BEHALF OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE POSITION OF THE  
CATHOLIC CHURCH IN HIS LAST MEETING, AND BELIEVES A  
REITERATION OF THE SAME POINTS AT THIS TIME WOULD BE HELPFUL.  
AT THE SAME TIME, THE HOLY SEE IS NOT CONVINCED THAT THE  
TIMING IS PROPITIOUS TO PRESS TOO HARD FOR SPECIFIC  
CONCESSIONS FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH PRIOR TO THE COMMUNIST  
PARTY CONGRESS, AS JIANG MAY BE LESS RECEPTIVE NOW THAN AFTER  
THE CONGRESS. RATHER, THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES IT WOULD BE  
USEFUL FOR PRESIDENT BUSH TO INSIST ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR  
ALL FAITHS IN CHINA AND TO CONVEY THAT THE UNITED STATES  
WOULD WELCOME NORMAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE HOLY  
SEE. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) ACCORDING TO FM TAURAN AND VATICAN CHINA DESK OFFICER  
ROTA-GRAZIOSI, THE HOLY SEE BELIEVES THAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN CHINA WILL BENEFIT MOST THROUGH THE UNIVERSAL ADVANCEMENT  
OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN CHINA. THE HOLY SEE WOULD WELCOME  
THE PRESIDENT'S AFFIRMATION OF UNITED STATES' SUPPORT FOR  
NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND CHINA AND  
FOR CHINESE GOODWILL GESTURES TOWARD THE CHURCH. SUCH  
GESTURES COULD INCLUDE PERMISSION FOR A SENIOR HOLY SEE  
REPRESENTATIVE TO VISIT A LOCAL CHINESE CHURCH OR AN EASING  
OF THE RESTRICTIONS ON THE MANY BISHOPS AND PRIESTS BEING  
HELD IN POLICE CUSTODY, HOUSE ARREST OR UNDER HEAVY  
SURVEILLANCE. OVER THE LONGER TERM, THE HOLY SEE WOULD LIKE  
TO SEE CHINESE AUTHORITIES PERMIT THE ORDINATION OF CHINESE  
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BISHOPS AND PRIESTS BY THE POPE AS WELL AS THE PILGRIMAGES  
AND OTHER VISITS OF CATHOLIC AUTHORITIES TO THE HOLY SEE.

3. (C) THE KEY TO SINO-VATICAN RELATIONS AT THIS JUNCTURE,  
THEY BELIEVE, IS FOR THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO BETTER  
UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THE SPECIFIC LINK BETWEEN CATHOLICS  
AND THE HOLY SEE. ACCORDING TO ROTA-GRAZIOSI, THE CHINESE  
REMAIN GRIPPED WITH FEAR THAT CATHOLIC CHURCH MEMBERSHIP  
WOULD THREATEN CHINESE CIVIL POWER. HE BELIEVED SUCH FEARS  
COULD BE ALLAYED IF THE CHINESE BETTER UNDERSTOOD THAT  
CATHOLIC FAITHFUL DO NOT ALWAYS FOLLOW THE HOLY SEE'S  
POSITIONS ON INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES AND THAT PAPAL  
AUTHORITY IS A SPIRITUAL, NOT POLITICAL, MATTER.

HARDT

NOTE: NOT PASSED TO ABOVE ADDRESSEE(S)

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